

MATTHEW BATTEN

Proposed by Paula Martin
Seconded by Johnny Hunt



Thank you for this opportunity to apply to join the board at STAR.

I grew up in a household that was not enthusiastic about football, my dad's friend started taking me to the terraces of Elm Park when I was six. That was the start of a relationship that has played a huge role in shaping my identity. From being surrounded in school by fans of Liverpool, West Ham, Crystal Palace, Arsenal, Manchester United etc... through the highs of two promotions to the Premier League, the lows of many days out at Wembley, not least the 1994/95 playoff final, the club has grown and with that its status in the community has grown, a generation of fans grow up with Reading as their team, their first club, their only club.

While the last few years have been lean, we are still a different outfit to what we were with the club I grew up in, I believe through having straddled the club having several different identities, I bring with this a good understanding of what it means to fans of both an older generation as well as those who are discovering the club today.

In parallel, I have seen STAR continue to evolve on a trajectory of professionalisation. The objectives of STAR are aligned to that of most, if not all fans. It provides a bridge between the community and the football club, a voice for fans and a critical friend for the club.

With the last few years, it feels we are reaching a critical juncture and the last 12 months some of the activity from STAR, further transparency, raising its profile as a voice for the fans I am personally of the view that we are reaching a stage where STAR can thrive with fresh eyes, challenge and an additional blend of skills joining the board to ensure that Reading has a football club that is around for another 150 years.

If I were appointed to join the board of STAR, I would recommend the organisation were to undertake an internal review. This would see a new board member, or independent person, meet with each member of STAR, plus those who have departed the organisation in the last couple of years, to review whether STAR is operating as cohesively as it could as an organisation and how to ensure that a pragmatic approach can be adopted where views may not be aligned to ensure that STAR can fulfil its objectives. Additionally, I would recommend that a new or independent person holds exit interviews to ensure that STAR continues to gain fresh insight and challenge to ensure the organisation continues to scrutinise itself as it evolves.

Further to my role as a lifelong Reading fan, I have worked in various roles across the Civil Service for the last 19 years. This has enabled me to develop a range of

skills that I believe would benefit STAR:

- I am a project manager by trade, this underpins my organised approach to actions and ensuring that we hold our activity and the club to account in a way which is SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound).
- I have worked in diplomatic roles that have required strong negotiating and conflict regulation skills as well as being empathetic.
- I also have experience of working in analytical roles which require considerable attention to detail and ability to scrutinise.
- I have worked in several roles where I was required to troubleshoot and resolve large strategic, programme or project level issues where existing resources are unable to identify solutions.
- I work strategically recognising how the work in my role contributes towards my individual objectives, the organisation, as well as wider Government including our international objectives. Recognising with STAR there are the interests of both Reading football club and the community, we will be in a position where there may be conflicting needs but with shared goals where compromise will often be compromise available or if not ways of communicating which will support these relationships.
- I also work tactically, recognising that it may not be possible to reach solutions required immediately but over time through building accountability.
- I am a firm believer in collaboration, openness, and transparency. Through STAR working in an engaging way with the community, with members visible and approachable, while showing insight into their activity, this continues to strengthen the trust of the community that STAR is there to represent them. We have seen great strides in the last year through the work of Ben Thomas and the perception of STAR as an organisation has improved. While it is important that STAR remains cognisant of its need to maintain a strong relationship with the club and ensuring STAR considers the interests of the club, this is a fine balance that we can further enhance. I am excited by the opportunity in this area.

I believe my rounded professional experience in addition to my passion for Reading Football Club places me in a position where I would be a strong asset for the Supporters Trust at Reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Batten', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Matthew Batten
23 May 2022.